

Minutes from the
SYNOD COUNCIL MEETING
March 19-20, 2021
Via Zoom

Present on Friday: Bishop Susan Candeia, Nancy Nagel (Vice President), Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon (Secretary), Daniel Lilienkamp, Susan Boxberger, Rev. Lorna Paulus, Mindy Tillberg, Joanie Saltzman, Linda Lockhart, Theo Keese, Terrance Freeman
Absent: Rev. David Strommen, Dallas Rakestraw, Rev. David Frerichs, Chelsea Deines

CALL TO ORDER

Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

SHARING & DEVOTION

Nancy led us in a time of sharing about things that we are slowly reengaging in that we haven't done in a long time. And we talked about things that we miss. Bishop Candeia read Psalm 13, a psalm of lament.

VISION & MISSION

Bishop Candeia presented the new mission statement for the Synod. We then had discussions in breakout rooms on each of the parts of the mission statement.

- The mission statement: ***United with Christ in Baptism:
Traveling the way of Jesus and
Joining God's reign of justice and radical love***

We also discussed core values & priorities for the work of the Synod.

- Our core values are:
 - Worship
 - Community
 - Love of our neighbor
 - Giving and Generosity
- The priorities for the work of the Synod are:
 - Leadership
 - Communication
 - Collaboration & Connection
- **SC 21.03.19.A1** **It was MSC – unanimously – (Lorna, Susan B.) to adopt this as the new mission statement for the Central States Synod.**

Bishop Candeia closed us with a prayer of lament and invitation to solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. This is response to recent violence in our country toward those of Asian descent.

We adjourned for the evening at 8:10pm.

We reconvened at 8:30am on Saturday, March 20. Chelsea Deines & David Strommen were now present. Daniel Lilienkamp was absent. Also joining us were Rev. Donna Simon & Rev. Kendra Nolde from the Synod Staff.

DWELLING IN THE WORD

Kendra & Donna led us in Dwelling in the Word as a way to introduce us to the Faithful Innovation process.

- Faithful Innovation Learning Communities comes out of Luther Seminary's Faith+Lead.
- It's a process that brings congregations together to find new ways to listen, to act, and to reflect on what was learned in the actions we take. The goal is to equip congregation teams with new practices that emphasize God's presence and leading as we faithfully innovate for future ministry.
- A Synod Guiding Team has been formed and is working on a plan to involve the rest of the Synod. They will likely begin recruiting congregations for the first cohort within the next couple months.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chad presented the minutes from the January 22, 2021 Executive Committee meeting.

- **SC 21.03.20.A2** **It was MSC (Mindy, Linda) to approve these minutes as presented.**

TREASURER'S REPORT

Scott presented a written report reflecting our year-end financial position as of January 31, 2021. Verbal highlights included:

- The amount of congregations was surprisingly good.
- It was also remarkably consistent, which has not been the case in the past.
- This large surplus does not include forgiveness of the PPP loan that we received from the COVID relief government program. We have submitted our application for loan forgiveness.
- We had a discussion about the stewardship of our funds, the costs of reentry.

Financial Status as of 1/31/21, after 12 months of the fiscal year, ending January 31, 2021.

Income from congregations

- \$1,616,056 received
- The amount received is \$66,056 more than what was anticipated in our revised spending budget, a 4.1% variance
- The amount received is \$48,556 more than received last year, a 3.0% variance

ELCA Churchwide Contribution

- \$808,028 contributed to Churchwide
- This is \$28,028 more than anticipated in the revised spending budget, a 3.5% variance
- The amount contributed is \$16,348 more than last year, a 2.0% variance

Synod Expenditures

- \$741,261 spent

- The amount spent is **\$100,690 less** than budgeted, a -13.6% variance
- This is also \$76,257 less than spent last year, a -10.3% variance

Total Support & Revenue vs. Total Expenditures

- \$1,692,771 received in Total Support & Revenue, \$70,820 more than anticipated and \$35,817 more than last year
- \$1,549,289 in Total Expenditures, \$72,662 less than anticipated, and \$59,909 less than last year
- **Net surplus of \$143,482** as compared to a \$47,756 surplus last year

Analysis of Financial Status

- The amount of support received from the congregations for the year was a huge surprise. Giving increased with the onset of the pandemic and remained consistent from March through July. Beginning in August, the giving amounts became more irregular. I believe this is consistent with the anecdotal feedback that we have heard from congregations that started to see giving decline after it was strong and consistent earlier in the pandemic. This is the third year in a row we have experienced a tremendous spike in support in December. This is especially remarkable this year.
- Synod expenditures are significantly lower than budgeted and lower than last year. This is due to reductions resulting from the pandemic like the delay of the annual audit, lower usage of supplies, few in-person meetings, and curtailed travel. In addition, we also reduced the staff by 1 FTE, experienced staffing changes with two of the campus ministry sites, and had much lower Candidacy costs.
- Our Total Support & Revenue amount was \$70,820 more than budgeted. This is due to the increased congregational support and the great response to the Annual Appeal of \$24,814. We ended the year with a healthy surplus! This does not include the PPP loan amount of \$167,200. This will allow us to do some things we haven't been able to do in a while, but we should consider this a one-time event and not the start of a trend. Unless it happens again!

Scott then presented a worksheet containing the Revised Budget for FYE 1/31/22 and the Proposed Budget for FYE 1/31/23.

Regarding the **Revised Budget for FYE 1/31/22**, changes included:

- We are planning to use \$81,668 of our current surplus for this current year. This is listed in the income section under "Temporarily Restricted Funds Released."
- We increased support for:
 - Hollis Center from \$3,500 to \$5,000
 - Kansas Interfaith Action Coalition from \$0 to \$2,500
 - Missouri Voices of Faith from \$0 to \$2,500
 - Faith Innovations from \$0 to \$10,000
 - Leadership Training from \$0 to \$10,000
 - Campus Ministry from \$130,000 to \$145,000

- Bethany College from \$10,000 to \$15,000
- Seminaries from \$20,000 to \$30,000
- Synod salaries decreased overall (due to a slightly different staffing organization), but we used the new Compensation Guidelines to adjust the salaries of our rostered staff. This resulted in some salary increases to bring them in line with the Compensation Guidelines. We also gave all of the staff a 3% cost of living adjustment.
- We created a couple new line items:
 - Tech Enhancements & Communications for \$10,000
 - Enhanced Outreach & Evangelism for \$20,000
 These funds will be distributed as grants & matching grants to synod congregations & conferences who need help.

Regarding the **Proposed Budget for FYE 1/31/23**, most things remain the same from the current year's Revised Budget. Changes or notes do include:

- Faith Innovations goes to \$0 after the initial investment.
 - A 2% salary increase for the entire staff.
 - Tech Enhancements & Communications decreases.
 - Enhanced Outreach & Evangelism decreases.
- **SC 21.03.20.A3 It was MSC (Susan B., Joanie) to approve the Proposed Budget for FYE 1/31/23 and present it for final approval at the 2021 Synod Assembly.**

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Nancy presented a list of her activities related to her role as Vice President. She has led the Mission Statement Task Force, consulted on a letter to the Synod regarding our nation's political situation, been part of the Budget Team, attended Synod Executive Committee, led the annual evaluation for the Bishop, been sitting in on the Local Planning Team for the Synod Assembly, attended monthly Zoom meetings for Synod Vice Presidents throughout the ELCA, taking classes through Lutheran School of Theology, and continuing to try to get a handle on the various ministries of our synod by attending various meetings as she's able.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Bishop Candea presented a written report. Verbal highlights included:

- The annual reports to the Bishops have been coming in, but there are a lot of rostered persons who have not been sending them in. Collecting them in some cases, including those with Synod Council calls, has been very difficult.
- There has been an increase in rostered persons who are struggling personally and in their current calls.
- She noted that the Future Church Initiative from Churchwide has not had the smoothest rollout. It involves restructuring the staff of Churchwide and to rethink the hierarchical structure of the ELCA. Susan Boxberger gave her perspective from sitting on the ELCA Church Council. They are

trying to be more collaborative and innovative. There will be a lot of experimenting, grant-giving, sharing what is learned, etc.

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE SYNOD

Written reports were submitted from:

- Lutherans Restoring Creations
- Faithful Innovations
- Leadership Training through Kansas Leadership Center
- Racial Justice Team
- Campus Ministry
- Camp Tomah Shinga
- Hollis Renewal Center
- Mission Table
- Congregational Vitality
- Lutheran Disaster Response
- PMA Program
- Directors of Evangelical Mission: Rev. Donna Simon and Rev. Kendra Nolde

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

Mindy Tillberg gave a brief update on the National Youth Gathering, which will take place in July 2022 in Minneapolis, MN. One of the biggest changes for Central States Synod is that we are part of a pilot program regarding financial aid. Congregations will now apply through the Synod for any financial aid and a task force has been formed for how to distribute these funds. Planning for the Gathering will restart in earnest in a couple months.

CONGREGATION CONSTITUTIONS

- **SC 21.03.20.A4** **It was MSC (Mindy, Scott) to approve the updated constitutions for Trinity (Chesterfield, MO), St. John (Russell, KS), Grace (Osage City, KS), and Messiah (Springfield, MO).**

MINISTRY PARTNERS

- The Bridge has been struggling to develop a worshipping community since their last intern left. Working with the DEM and Churchwide, the board of the Bridge has voted to withdraw as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community.
 - **SC 21.03.20.A5** **It was MSC (Chad, Linda) to recognize The Bridge as a Ministry Partner and acknowledge their withdrawal as a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community.**
- Missouri Faith Voices – We have been doing some advocacy and ministry with this group recently. They have offered the Central States Synod a position on their board.
 - **SC 21.03.20.A6** **It was MSC (Mindy, Chelsea) to recognize Missouri Faith Voices as a Ministry Partner.**

THE GATHERING TABLE

The synod owns the property on Independence Ave. where The Gathering Table meets and gathers. We currently maintain insurance on the property. The Bishop proposed putting together a building use agreement in consultation with our synod attorney. A building use agreement might allow us to work in better partnership with their leadership team and ensure some accountability, but also allow them to retain control of the ministry. We had a discussion about the property, their ministry, and our continuing role in it. Next steps include creating that building use agreement, getting with a realtor to assess the property, and coming back to Synod Council at a later date.

ROSTER REPORT

Bishop Canda presented a written roster report.

- On Leave From Call
 - **SC 21.03.20.A7** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Katherine Hayes On Leave From Call status effective February 16, 2021 through the end of the year.** This is her 1st year of OLFC.
- Specialized Ministry
 - **SC 21.03.20.A8** **It was MSC to grant Philip Deng a Synod Council call to specialized ministry to serve as a mission developer for the South Sudanese worshipping community in St. Joseph, MO, effective March 14,2021 through December 31, 2021.** He was ordained on March 14, 2021.
- Retirements
 - **SC 21.03.20.A9** **It was MSC to grant Rev. Liz Backus retirement status effective February 1, 2021.**
 - **SC 21.03.20.A10** **It was MSC to grant Rev. John Backus retirement status effective February 1, 2021.**

2021 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The Local Planning Team submitted a written report updating their progress.

- Offering designation
 - **SC 21.03.20.A11** **It was MSC (Lorna, Susan B.) to accept the recommendation of the committee regarding the Synod Assembly offering by designating**
 - **1/3 of the offering to go to Churchwide Disaster Response, COVID-19 Fund**
 - **1/3 of the offering to go to the Central States Synod Bishop's Samaritan Fund**
 - **1/3 of the offering to go to advocacy, shared between Missouri Faith Voices and Kansas Interfaith Action**
- Voting Member Waivers – Several congregations requesting voting member waivers.
 - **SC 21.03.20.A12** **It was MSC to approve the voting member waivers for St. John (Lancaster, KS), Hebron (Burdick, KS), Zion (Phillipsburg, KS), Emmanuel (Stuttgart, KS) to send two women; and Trinity (Chesterfield, KS) to send three women and one man.**

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

The Compensation Guidelines Committee presented written and updated guidelines for 2022.

- **SC 21.03.20.A13** **It was MSC (Scott, David) to approve the 2022 Compensation Guidelines and present them for final approval at the 2021 Synod Assembly.**

NOMINATIONS & APPOINTMENTS

The Nominating Committee is making progress toward finding nominees for all of the open positions. A written report of their progress was submitted. They have identified & nominated the following people to be appointed by the Synod Council:

- For the Resolutions Committee: Rev. Emily McQuillan, Mark Conn, and Connie Harris
 - **SC 21.03.20.A14** **It was MSC (Lorna, Mindy) to appoint Rev. Emily McQuillan, Mark Conn, and Connie Harris to the Resolutions Committee.**
- For the Compensation Guidelines Committee: Dennis Kemper
 - **SC 21.03.20.A15** **It was MSC (Mindy, Susan B.) to appoint Dennis Kemper to the Compensation Guidelines Committee.**
- For the LSTC Board: Jeanette Schumm for a 3rd and final term
 - **SC 21.03.20.A16** **It was MSC (Linda, Lorna) to appoint Jeanette Schumm to serve a third term on the LSTC Board.**
- For the CSS Mission Endowment Committee: Ralph Donald
 - **SC 21.03.20.A17** **It was MSC (Scott, Linda) to appoint Ralph Donald to serve on the CSS Mission Endowment Committee.**

PASTORAL ETHICS POLICY

Bishop Canda presented two policies related to pastoral ethics when a pastor retires and when a pastor resigns a call. Rev. Dave Whetter has been working on these.

- **SC 21.03.20.A18** **It was MSC (Linda, Susan B.) to approve and adopt the “Policy of Pastoral Ethics and Covenant of Departure” and the “Policy of Pastoral Ethics and Covenant of Departure for Retiring Pastors”.**

RECOGNITION OF GIFT

The Central States Synod received a \$2,500 gift from David Rook. It was recommended that this gift go to the Endowment Committee for allocation.

UPCOMING DATES

- May 14, 2021 Executive Committee 1:00pm
- June 4, 2021 Synod Council Afternoon, time TBD
- June 4-5, 2021 Synod Assembly

ADJOURNMENT

Bishop Canda prayed and blessed us. We adjourned at 12:10pm.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Chad Langdon
Central States Synod Secretary*